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# AT MY MILLION

by J. EDGAR PARK



Fido (American)  
Christmas, - Fiction.

—

H. W. Wilson Co  
5 FEB. 1916

Park

NBO



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*How I Spent My  
Million*

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*I'm a millionaire!*

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# *How I Spent My Million*

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## *A Christmas Story*

By

*J. Edgar Park*

*Author of "The Man Who Missed  
Christmas," etc., etc.*



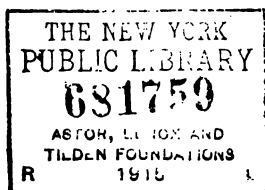
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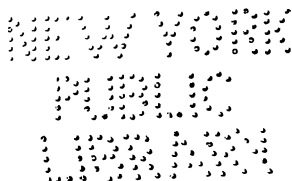
ROY WOOD  
JULY  
1915

My mother's lamp burns late tonight,  
My mother's hands are worn,  
That I a happy little boy  
Should go to school the morn.

My mother likes to see me gay,  
She likes to see me good,  
The way she most enjoys her meals  
'S to see me eat the food.

I've never found what mother likes,  
She always thinks of me,  
She's planning now my Christmas day,  
My fun, my Christmas-tree.

But, mother dear, I'm growing fast,  
You'll fool me but a while,  
I'll have a Mother's Christmas day,  
And pay you back in style!



THEY WERE  
2180  
KAROL

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## *How I Spent My Million*

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**I** RUBBED my eyes and looked at the letter a second time. Yes, I was not asleep, the thing had happened. There was my cup of coffee and the half-eaten doughnut just as I had left them when I went to the door for the mail. There was the other letter that had come, still unopened, and here was this one from a firm of lawyers I had never heard of before. And the sum and substance of it was this:—my old neighbor, John Doby, whose funeral I had just attended two days before, had made me the sole legatee of his entire estate, which, to quote the letter before me, “runs considerably over one million dollars.”

My first act was to pour the whole pitcher of cream — half of which I intended keeping for supper — into my coffee, what did it mat-

## HOW I SPENT MY MILLION

ter?—I was a millionaire. I lifted up the luxurious cup to drink my health but at the first gulp it suddenly struck me—old Jack Doby has made me his heir—the idea was so ridiculous that I choked with laughter, cream and coffee and in the next moment came near to expiring without having had time even to make a will.

“Well,” I said to myself when I recovered my equanimity again. “I can have anything I want now. I’m a millionaire.” Then I thought to myself: “What in the world were those things I wanted so much? I remember thinking of them lately and wishing I could have them but knowing I couldn’t have them. I shall be able to have them now. What in the world were they?” One by one they began to come back to me:—I had wished many a time that Mary’s, my old housekeeper’s, nose might be about an eighth of an inch shorter than it was. Perhaps that was the thing that had irritated me most in life. How many, many times when she came in in the morning

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## HOW I SPENT MY MILLION

and said, "Good morning, Sir," have I thought that the thing I most desired in the world was just that reduction. Then the other thing was the way my brother's wife was always praising up her children and the way she used the phrase, "though I say it as shouldn't," when she was relating some particularly extravagant judgment upon the miraculous endowments of her progeny. I remember thinking that I should be perfectly happy if only I could change that irritating trait which showed itself in an otherwise charming individual by that oft-repeated phrase. Oh, yes, I remember another thing I had often said to myself I desired more than anything else in the world. That was that my sister Jane might have a sense of humor. The way she always tried to explain my jokes to the rest of the company had always been one of my most exacting crosses.

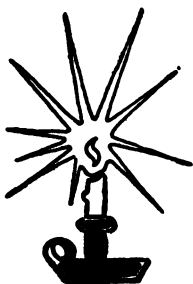
Well, I was a millionaire now and could have anything I wanted so, of course, I would have these things attended to right off. Sud-



## HOW I SPENT MY MILLION

denly it struck me with a cold shock that after all, I was no better off than I was before. Even a million would not go any way at all towards reducing Mary's nose or changing the vulgar trait in Maria, or giving Jane a sense of humor — no nor in winning the other thing which, if the truth be told, I desired more than any of these — no, I sadly thought, even the possession of a million would not make me appear a whit more attractive or desirable in the eyes of someone who seemed to regard me now, as far as I could ascertain, as a mere object in her landscape. The fact was the million did not seem to help me to get the things I wanted most after all. Money tends to cushion you up among things and it was people I was most interested in. I took a drink of water to get the taste of the coffee out of my mouth. There had been too much cream in it. After all what did I want with a million? I didn't want to have to tour Europe insulated from its folk and from the country in a motor car—I had tramped the Black

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*I had wished many times that my old  
housekeeper's nose was a little shorter*



## HOW I SPENT MY MILLION

Forest with a knapsack on my back chatting with the folk as I went along, stayed three weeks in a hill-town in Italy at the rate of a few cents a day, and traveled for days fourth class in the trains in Germany sitting on my trunk, laughing and learning all the way—why should I banish myself to the horribly respectable and provincial isolation of a motor-car? What could I do with a million? I didn't care for terrapin and squab. I like nothing better than apple pie and a bit of cheese after a New England boiled dinner. What would it mean? Simply that I should have to spend days in the subterranean atmosphere of safe-deposit vaults clipping coupons and verifying securities; I should have to read anxiously in the evenings the horrible looking hieroglyphics of the financial page of the newspaper and worry weary nights about the safety of funds I did not want and never could use.

One thing was clear. I'd give that million away and get done with it the first opportunity

## HOW I SPENT MY MILLION

I could get. I said this to myself as I took up and opened the second letter which was lying unopened beside my plate.

"Ah, yes," I said, as I read it over quickly, "here is a chance right off to do some good with it." This was the other letter:

*National Society for the Redemption of  
Christmas*

*23 Wall Street, New York.*

*Dear Sir:*

*A number of public-spirited citizens have banded together for the purpose of redeeming Christmas from the many wasteful and useless features which cluster around it and of transforming it into an annual event which will be of real economic and moral value to the community. In the past the untrue legend of Santa Claus has made many young children liars; the destruction of thousands of young trees has robbed the future of many hundred dollars' worth of white pine and spruce lumber, a great amount of money is expended on ab-*

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*The destruction of thousands of young  
trees has robbed the future of many  
hundred dollars' worth of white  
pine and spruce lumber*

1

## HOW I SPENT MY MILLION

*solutely useless illuminated cards, Christmas tree ornaments, candles, fancy wrapping paper, ribbon and house decorations, holly, mistletoe and other such extravagant and useless vanities.*

*If the money which runs to waste in these useless channels were only saved and put in the savings bank we calculate that every man, woman and child in the United States would have 53½ cents to his name in his bank book on January first. If this were allowed to accumulate for about seventeen years our actuary calculates it would amount in all probability, in case the bank did not fail, to nearly a dollar. That is to say, that the money which is going to be wasted on Christmas vanities during the next few weeks would actually, ultimately amount to one dollar for every man, woman and child in the United States.*

*Still more serious is this matter when we regard it from the point of view of what this money would do in providing strictly useful gifts for those who need them this year. It*



## HOW I SPENT MY MILLION

*has actually been calculated that the amount thus wasted on fal-de-ral would purchase one warm, winter, flannel petticoat, two mittens and a chest protector for every worthy widow in the United States, and enough would be left over to provide  $1\frac{3}{4}$  pairs of stout boots for each orphan in public institutions throughout the country.*

*Still more if the barbaric custom of gorging unnecessarily at the Christmas dinner were given up and people were satisfied with a simple, plain meal that day as on other days — there would be enough money saved to provide a loaf of bread and a pinch of salt for every colored family in the South and also to give every prisoner in our State jails the present of a red herring and a plate of boiled rice.*

*In view of these facts we ask you to sign and send to us the enclosed pledge that you will spend this year an entirely rational and utilitarian Christmas, spending money only on useful and rational objects. We also ask you to enclose ten dollars as a membership fee to*

## HOW I SPENT MY MILLION

*pay salary of secretary, treasurer, office expenses, etc., of this new organisation. Larger donations are requested from those interested.*

[Signed.]

BARTIMÆUS TINTOES,

President.

“What wonderful luck!” I said to myself, “to get a million and directions for the most useful method of spending it both in the same mail.”

The street door bell rang, and in a moment Mary’s nose appeared at the door, followed after the lapse of a moment by Mary to say Miss Helene Gracie wished to see me just for a moment. What a morning I was having! All the best things in the world were pouring in upon me:—money, directions for spending it, and now—the very beatific vision herself, who although the reader may not be aware of it has already been referred to in this narrative, was at my door to see me. I stood up hurriedly, patted down a kind of pong-pong that was apt to stand up where the top joins

## HOW I SPENT MY MILLION

onto the back of my hair, straightened my tie, wiped the cream off my moustache and went out to the little hallway to ask Miss Gracie in, stumbling, however, on the way on a rug and landing in a heap at her feet.

"This is very sudden," said she as she helped me up.

"It may seem so to you," said I, "but it has really been coming on for years. Won't you come in and sit down?"

She came in and sat down in the brown plush arm-chair by the fire. She had never been to see me before, but somehow as she sat there I remembered having seen her in that very chair thousands of times in my day dreams.

"Won't you have a doughnut?" I said, handing her the plate.

She took one, saying she was quite hungry, as she had been out skating for an hour since an early breakfast.

"Take a lot," said I; "take two! Don't mind the expense. I'm a millionaire."



*Stumbling, however, on the way on a rug  
and landing in a heap at her feet*



## HOW I SPENT MY MILLION

"I'm so glad to hear that," she said, "because I have called to ask you for a subscription."

My eyes immediately drew up the portcullis, narrowed almost to a line and I assumed that stony abstracted appearance so necessary a part of a rich man's defense against suggestion of attack by humanitarian bandits.

"I am sorry," I said, "but you could not have struck me at a worse time. I refer not merely to the shrinkage in my holdings which makes me feel rather poor this morning"—I waved my hand in the direction of the newspaper which I was glad to see had fallen on the floor with the financial page uppermost—"but also I have just arranged to give liberally to this cause," and I handed her the letter of Mr. Bartimæus Tintoos.

"Oh, I am so sorry," she said, as she took it, "I wanted you to give half a dollar to help us to buy old Mrs. Gulpins a dicky-bird and a cage."

I gasped in amazement, but said nothing

## HOW I SPENT MY MILLION

till she read the letter through. She read it without a word or sign, folded it carefully up into a very small size and then suddenly leaning forward stuck it into the reddest part of the fire, where it was burned in a moment.

"Oh, I have the address on the envelope all right," I said. "You're mad because you know it's perfectly true."

"Mrs. Gulpins — a dicky-bird —" I said in derision. "You know perfectly she has not enough to eat. She needs potatoes and mittens, instead of a dicky-bird. Now, it is quite true, Miss Gracie, what you took for a joke. Mr. Doby has made me his heir," and I handed her the lawyer's letter.

She read that through and returned it to me with these cabalistic words: "Well, that spoils you! No, I won't ask you even for fifty cents. You can't afford it, you poor man. They've robbed you of all the riches of life and given you instead another man's cast-off clothes." She rose to go. "It's all nonsense," she said, looking at a white wafer of



*"Mrs. Gulpins, a dicky-bird," I said in derision. "She needs potatoes and mittens instead of a dicky-bird"*





## HOW I SPENT MY MILLION

ash in the fire resentfully. "It's all nonsense, this practical business. Mrs. Gulpins wants a dicky-bird in a gold cage. She has been dreaming of having one in her sunny bay window for the last forty years. You and I think she ought to have potatoes and mittens. Well, perhaps she ought to have them. If so, we ought to see she gets them some other time. But not at Christmas. For all the potatoes and mittens in the world would not make her one-millionth time so happy as this canary she has set her heart upon. Christmas is the time for giving people happiness, instead of giving them the things you think they need. Look at my small brother Tommy. Now, what I think he needs most of all is a sound spanking, but Christmas is not the time for giving him that. I'm going to give him the most useless toy telescope you ever saw because he wants it."

I sighed deeply, a safe-deposit-vault sigh, and saw her into the hall. At the street door I said:

## HOW I SPENT MY MILLION

"Miss Gracie, I made two vows just before you came in this morning. One was to get rid of this entire million before Christmas Day, so as to be able to enjoy myself then. And the second was to spend it all on things that may be as frivolous and useless as they like, provided they give real pleasure to the people who get them. I want to blow it all in into a great bacchanalia of joy to other folk of the most unexpected and yet longed-for luxuries and happinesses, and I want you and your mother to help me to plan the whole thing out. Will you help me if I come round this evening?"

"Show me you are in earnest," she said, "by giving me that fifty cents."

I handed it to her, saying, "Now I have only \$999,999.50 to spend, the burden is lightening."

"You have more sense than I thought," said she. "Come this evening."

I was very nearly late to my office desk, but not quite, however. I comforted myself by

## HOW I SPENT MY MILLION

thinking that in all my ten years' work there I had never been so nearly late before. I found it hard to work. I was so happy, thinking of that visit I was to make that evening. Luncheon hour came and I called at the lawyer's, where I arranged to have my inheritance turned into a form suitable for my purpose. The afternoon was a busy one, but seemed long in spite of it. At four o'clock I was summoned to the office of the chief. I went in with a tremor, some bad error might have been discovered in my calculations of that morning. It would seem a poor excuse to say with the Scotch poet —

“Love is like a dizziness  
It will na let a man  
Gang about his bizziness.”

However, the great Mr. Hovell looked at me kindly over his glasses and told me to sit down. “My dear sir,” he said, “Mr. Jones and I have been greatly pleased with your work during

## HOW I SPENT MY MILLION

the past year and I have called you in to tell you we have added two hundred dollars to your salary to begin the first of the month."

My first thought was, "What fun it will be telling Helene!" I was feeling towards her the way a young man does sometimes feel, you know, that is to say, I spoke to her and of her as Miss Gracie, but thought of her as Helene. This million business, however, rather spoiled the fun of that for the present, so I resolved not to tell her anything about it till that was well out of the way.

In the evening I rang the bell at Mrs. Gracie's door. I found them both sitting at the dining-room table, which had been cleared. Each of them had a blank sheet of paper in front of her, and a pencil in her hand. As I came into the room the face of each was as blank as the paper. Miss Helene looked up as I entered. "Oh, I had no idea it was going to be such work," she said. "Mother and I sat down here after dinner gaily to spend your million for you as foolishly as we could and



*"I have called you in to tell you that we  
have added two hundred dollars  
to your salary"*

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## HOW I SPENT MY MILLION

we can't think of a single useless way to make away with it that won't do more harm than good. Before I had one — I mean before you had one — to dispose of I knew lots of ways to spend it, but now I can't think of one."

"We've thought of everything," her mother said as I sat down, too, before a piece of paper. "Of an endowed soda-fountain here free to all high school children, but that would cost far more a year than the interest on a million. Besides, it would lead to overcrowding of the high school, which is full enough already, and so increase the tax rate for the poor. We thought of presenting an automobile, chauffeur and garage to each cook or maid who had been more than three weeks in the same place, but that would use up hardly any of the money and would keep our domestics moving faster than ever."

"Our position," I said, "is not unlike Samuel Butler's 'Complete Drunkard,' who would not give money to sober people. He said 'they would only eat it and send their children



## HOW I SPENT MY MILLION

to school with it.' I've been worrying subconsciously all day about it. I see exactly what shouldn't be done. But I can't for the life of me see what should be done. Now, every Christmas for ten years I've given Mary, my housekeeper, an apron and half a dozen handkerchiefs. Of course she is thankful to get them. I suppose she supplies her nieces with them. But if I only knew it, there is something she would really like, she would give her head for. But I don't know what it is, and what's more, I can't find out what it is."

We all sat round the table, appalled at the situation, blank paper, blank faces, hearts beating regularly blank, blank, blank —

Sadly I began to be convinced of the impossibility of doing any real good with my million. I could take away the self-respect of the students at the State University by paying their fees for them, or I could increase the bricks and mortar of a score of schools, but what those schools needed was more in-



*We thought of presenting an automobile to  
each cook or maid who had been more  
than three weeks in a place*

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## HOW I SPENT MY MILLION

spirational personalities in the teaching chairs and more ambitious students in the learners' desks, and that my money was powerless to give. I could build scores of opposition churches with it, but I'd rather pay to have half existing churches burned. I wanted something that would give at least a moment of glorious life to people that had never had the chance to feel that way before.

At last Helene broke the silence. "This won't do," she said. "Who are the people who most deserve to have the fun out of this million? We must all have the answer to that question on our papers before the clock strikes nine."

I looked up and saw it was five minutes to. The wheels in my brain began to buzz. Something must be thought, and thought immediately. Helene had her hands over her eyes, and the room seemed darkened thereby. Her mother's head was on the table. Three minutes, four minutes passed, and just as the clock gave that whir, its warning that it was just

## HOW I SPENT MY MILLION

getting up steam to strike, we all simultaneously took up our pencils and wrote something on our papers.

Now, you may believe in magic or not, as you please, but the fact remains that the word each of us had written was the same. I got up and danced about in glee. "If Miss Helene were not here," I said, "I would offer to kiss the whole company, I am so glad!" The word we had all written down was this, the word "Mothers." At last we had something to start on. We were all agreed that the mothers of the world were those who denied themselves the things they wanted in order that they should give to others the things those others thought they needed.

"Now," I went on to point out in my loquacious glee, "a present has been defined by Vernon Lee as 'a thing which one wants given by a person whom one likes,' it being understood that the thing is 'a thing one would otherwise have done without.' It is up to us now," I said, "to get in touch with the peo-  
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## HOW I SPENT MY MILLION

ple the mothers like — and to put it in their power to give to the mothers the thing the mothers want but had made up their minds to do without.”

Then Helene said, “I am getting the whole scheme clear in my head. Wait a minute.”

The room was all bright now. I sat down and shaded my eyes so as to look pensive, while I was really looking through my fingers at her.

“I have the whole scheme ready now,” she said in a minute. “You get in touch with the teachers of the schools in the East Side wards and have them set this subject for a theme, that all the children are to write and bring this coming Monday, ‘What Would Mother Like for Christmas.’ You make the regulations, explain that it is not what Mother needs, but what Mother would like, and that it is not what Mother would like others to have, but what she would like for herself; and have it explained in each school that there are chances that a certain Santa Claus will do his best to

## HOW I SPENT MY MILLION

help the child who writes the simplest and sincerest theme to give Mother just what she wants for Christmas."

"And," said I, "let's appoint ourselves the judges."

Mrs. Gracie undertook to see the superintendent and heads of the schools, telling them just as much as would make it clear and just as little as would prevent discovery of the perpetrators of this Christmas spree. There were four teachers, we all agreed, who would take the right point of view in the matter, and they and Mrs. Gracie undertook to weed out the ineligible sheets from the pile of brief themes. Then we three were to meet again and award the prizes.

It seemed only a few days before we were gathered together around the same table with a pile of themes in front of us, several hundred in number. In addition, there was a list of several thousand articles costing less than one hundred dollars each, of none of which Mr. Bartimæus Tintoos would have approved, but

## HOW I SPENT MY MILLION

which the larger board of judges thought would bring genuine joy to the mothers whose children had suggested them.

Miss Helene had been granted a week's leave of absence from the school where she taught in order to go over the returns thoroughly. What a wonderful study they had been! First, there were a great many rejected suggestions in which our fallen human nature had played a great part, of which this is a specimen:

"I think the thing which would give my mother the greatest pleasure would be to see me riding round on one of those little cycles which are in the window of Tontine's store. She has often said that she would enjoy that more than anything else."

Or this one,—

"My mother would like some of that sticky yellow candy that gets into your teeth. She



## HOW I SPENT MY MILLION

laughs at me for pulling big strings of it out of my mouth, but Pa says she used to enjoy sticky things herself before she got store-teeth."

Some had to be rejected because they suggested things that no money could buy: that little children who had gone to the better land might come back into the mother's empty arms if it were only for a moment; that coarse, cruel, dissolute husbands might be transformed into the Sir Galahads they once seemed in the eyes of loving maidens — Oh, the pathos of that suggestion! — "the thing my mother would like most would be that my father should be the way he used to be."

Helene said there were many you could simply pray about, there was nothing you could do — ones like these:

"My mother says the thing she wants most in the world is that I should be a good man like what my grandfather was."

## HOW I SPENT MY MILLION

"My father says my mother will never be happy in heaven till she has us all there, too; so we are to be good and say the prayer she taught us every night and, he says, perhaps we'll all live together happily over there again some time. It's lonely here now, especially for father."

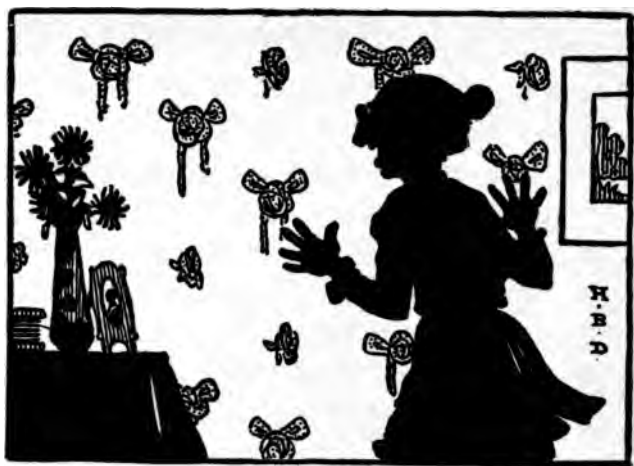
"My mother is an aunt. She says my real mother was nicer than she is. But I don't see how that could be. She says the thing she would like most in the world would be to be as young as I am again and as pretty as my mother was."

The list of articles suggested included very many pieces of jewelry, and silk dresses, new hats, "stylish" baby carriages, pictures of all kinds, chiefly enlarged family photographs, rocking chairs for the parlor. One mother wanted enough to print a little book of poems she had written that she might give copies of it to her friends. Another wanted to be able

## HOW I SPENT MY MILLION

to pay for prayers for the rest of the soul of her dead son. Another's longing was for a rosebud paper with ribbons on the parlor wall. Several dreamed of a season ticket to the winter's series of concerts; and for a great many the idea of being able to have some big yellow chrysanthemums on the table once in a while was perfectly intoxicating. Furs of various forms and shapes attracted many and Helene, who knew some of them, said they were those whom you would least expect to care for such finery. I chuckled as I thought how enraged Mr. Bartimæus Tintoos would be to see me writing an order for a set of expensive furs for an Italian woman who supported her family by washing floors. But that was what little Angelina Maria said her mother wanted most of all, and I calculated it would give Mrs. Ferrari more of pleasure than anything anyone could dream of giving the wife of the man upon whose kitchen floor she worked Tuesday and Saturday. She probably would put them in a box and keep them there till the moths ate

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*'Another's longing was for a rosebud paper  
with ribbons on the parlor wall*

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## HOW I SPENT MY MILLION

them, but in the meantime every morning she woke up she would feel the beatitude of the possession of those furs as a kind of glory in the back of her mind, and maybe take a glance at them in their box before she slipped out in the dark to wash floors till it grew dark again. It was great fun going over the pile of themes upon the table. "My mother would like most of all to see her old home in Sweden again and her old mother, who lives there still, but she cannot get any one to look after us children when she's away." Helene knew how that could be arranged and I wrote out an order for the Swedish trip. Another rather ambiguous suggestion was this,—“My mother has never been in an automobile and she has never seen Niagara Falls. I can't get her to say, but I think she'd like these.” “My mother would like to be able to put a big, red granite cross over baby's grave in the cemetery.” “My mother says if she had the money she'd go and have the operation Mrs. Milaney had that made her so much better, only it costs one hun-

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dred dollars, and if she's got on without it for ten years, she guesses she can do without it right along."

"An operation seems a funny kind of useless luxury," I said to Mrs. Gracie, "but I think this comes within our domain, doesn't it?"

Gold-rimmed eye-glasses instead of steel spectacles attracted the soul of one Mrs. Moriarty, and a "piano to put ornaments on" was provided for Mrs. Stevaniski. Forty-two mothers were given orders for holidays at various longed-for summer resorts from Atlantic City to Coney Island, with free passes to all the shows, and provision made for a trained helper to look after their homes in the meantime. The way one of these suggestions was worded was very realistic. "Mother says what she would like most of all would be to get away from the sound of a baby or any of us children for about a week, so as she could sleep mornings and sit down once in a while daytimes."



*"Mother says what she would like most  
of all would be to get away from the  
sound of a baby for about a week"*





## HOW I SPENT MY MILLION

A great host of mothers seemed simply to have told their children that what they desired most in the world was "to be rich and have nothing to do." Helene suggested sending to each of these deluded parents a photograph of my face, as I looked when I informed her for the first time that I was a millionaire. She said the sepulchral look on it would undeceive the mothers as to the happiness of being rich. "As for having nothing to do," I added, "I have never been so busy in my whole life as since I got my million."

"But you have looked very happy," said Mrs. Gracie, looking at me.

"I have been," said I, looking at Miss Helene.

We really spent a series of most delightful evenings together till at last the week before Christmas I began, with the aid of some experts, to total up just how much I had spent. Hard to spend a million? Why, it was the easiest thing in the world. How the figures did mount up! We were in the tens of thou-

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sands almost before we had started, and when you have spent \$450,000 on the little things, with all the larger trips to Europe and such things before you, well, you begin to appreciate how small a sum of money a million really is. In fact, we arrived at the end too soon, and the "glass bookcase with red and green books in it" that Bartholomew Bryan had found to be his mother's greatest desire was left out in the end, as well as three dinners in the Touraine, about which we were in doubt because in the contract they included the family. Helene, however, would not stand this exclusion and insisted on subscribing fifteen dollars from her own savings for the bookcase, while I unwillingly had, out of mere shame, to put up the money which I had been saving, for a very different kind of house-keeping, to provide these three swell dinners for the ladies from Braeson Court and Carlton Alley and the janitor's wife from the Boarminster.

Time would fail to tell of how the wonder-  
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## HOW I SPENT MY MILLION

ful secret was imparted to the children who had won the great prizes, and of how they, swelling with celestial glee, their souls tramping on the heavenly clouds, found their way home to tell their sceptical parents that they had got a prize for mamma which was coming Christmas eve.

Another happy afternoon we spent together, Helene, her mother and I, sorting out the labels which the children had written to accompany the presents: "Mamma, with love from Pasquale, Merry Christmas"; "Mother, with Sophia's love, Merry Christmas"; "My Dear Mamma, with my heart's love, Elizabeth." On the evening of the day before Christmas they were all distributed.

Never since the day when the voice was heard in Rama of Rachel weeping for her children was there ever heard so great a swelling of the voices of mothers, this time weeping for joy, singing for gladness, but most of all lost in transport at the thought that it was their little Alfredo, that it was their little Michael,

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that it was their own little Mary or Priscilla who had brought to them by their own skill at school these great gifts.

Early on that Christmas eve, Helene and I went out to bring Mrs. Gulpins the bird and cage she had contented herself to expect in heaven. As we walked home, house after house was illuminated and the sounds of greatest joy came often out of the smallest houses. "Things taste so much better and seem so much more heavenly in little houses," said Helene, as we stood outside one and heard the screams of delight and the enraptured huggings and kissings of some little mortal who was crying out at the top of her shrill voice, "I knew it all the time. It's a present from Me. Mamma, it's from Me."

There were tears in both our eyes and we went on down street after street — we could hardly tear ourselves away. Helene was always saying as we turned home, "Oh, we must look how the outside of wee Jeannie MacPherson's house looks!" And so back we went

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just to catch the expressman at the door and see all heaven revealed in a hallway 4x6. "Well," I said, "I don't think a million ever gave such pleasure before, do you?"

"No," she said, "it has given at least one moment of crowded glorious life to the very mothers who thought their life was doomed to be drab for the rest of time, drabbier every year. Only one thing I regret," she said; "you've gone and spent \$50 more than your million and you haven't bought yourself a thing out of it. I wish I'd asked Mary, your housekeeper, what useless luxury you'd have liked and I could easily have slipped it into the accounts somehow without your knowing."

"I'll tell you exactly what I do want," I said; "it comes into our contract perfectly, because it is something absolutely useless and ornamental only."

We were coming in under the shade of the trees that fronted on her house and I took my life in my hand and told her just exactly what it was I wanted more than anything else in the

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world. The stars were shining brightly in the sky and if you looked away up to the east you could see one great new star shining, covering the whole east side of the city with its glory.

I have called your attention to the sky and to the stars and to the East Side simply to divert your attention from the walk under the trees. I say it politely but firmly, but it really was no business of yours, you know.

"But, John," she said in a moment, "we'll have to wait a long, long time before we've saved enough money to be married."

How my heart leapt up then to be able to tell her that my salary had been raised.

"That means we'll only have to wait a year or so, then I'll have enough to get a small house at any rate."

"And you said you know things tasted so much better in small houses." She smiled at me.

Keep your eyes upon the sky, my friends! See that falling star up there? How wonderful it is.



*"My little girl told you, didn't she? that I  
wanted a son more than anything  
else in the world"*

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The clock struck nine as I came to her door and began to say good night, at ten-thirty she rang the bell in spite of me.

"Mother," she cried, as we got into the hall, "we forgot that you were a mother, too, and have come to ask you what you wanted for Christmas."

Her mother looked at us both, then, kissing me, she said, "My little girl told you, didn't she? that I wanted a son more than anything else in the world."

"No," I said, "I told her."

"A merry Christmas!" she said, kissing us both again.

As she ran upstairs, I heard the sweetest sound I ever heard. Was it a happy laugh through tears? Was it a mother's prayer that was half a song? I know not.

I heard it, and then as if it were a single note sung as prelude to some triumphant chorus, lo, the whole world outside responded to it with a long, deep, tender sound of surpassing sweetness, that rose and swelled and

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died away contented in a long-drawn sigh of rest over the whole East Side.

"It is the song of the angels," said I.

"Yes," said Helene; "it is the song of the mothers; God has answered our prayers; He has comforted even those whom we could not help. Well, you have spent your million, my dear," she said, after a pause; "I hope you are satisfied."

"Oh, yes, there are millions of better things in the world," said I, taking one.

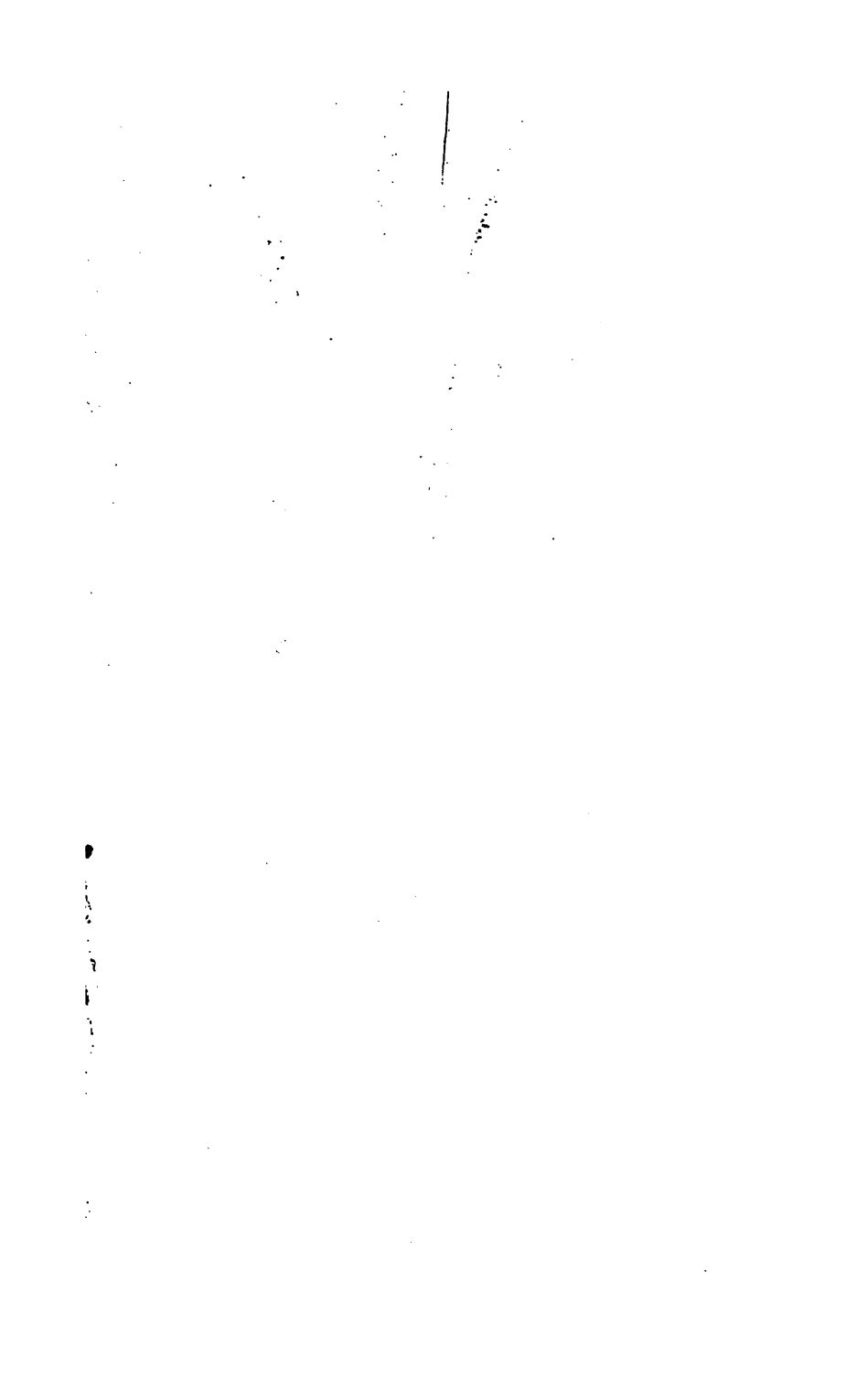
We looked out together through the open door and saw shining down upon the quiet world millions of stars.



*We looked out together through the open  
door and saw shining down upon the  
quiet world millions of stars*

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